

Ed Greenwood Q&A Gencon 2003

Ed is a regular at Gencon. He has several types of talks and events over the course of the four day convention. These notes are from Gencon 2003 when I attended a talk on the business of writing. While Ed does have one or two things that are free, all of them are pre-register simply because of space. So, if you want to get in on one of Ed's events be sure to sign up for Gencon early and to use their website to pre-register for workshops and ticket events.

Now that I have this out of the way, notes from Ed about how to be a writer:

- 1) Write every day. Writing is your "job."
- 2) Write across genre. Don't limit your creativity.
- 3) Finish your novel entire then go back and edit. Do not try to sell a book which is not finished if you are a first time author.
- 4) Research your market. Know the length, style, and topics which are currently selling. Get up to three years of back issues of a magazine to read so you can see the themes and styles.
- 5) Check online for writing guidelines for a specific house. Send a query if they are not available.
- 6) Triple the amount of time it gives on the website for a response from the publisher.
- 7) NEVER STAPLE THINGS YOU SEND TO PUBLISHERS!
- 8) Look for sales figures and information in Publishers Weekly

Ed mentioned markets for work. He pointed out that certain houses will focus in certain types of fiction. He also noted that the typical thing you think of for a specific publisher might not be the only thing they publish. Harlequin and Silhouette are known for romance novels but also have genre books of Christian romance and fantasy romance that are huge sellers and one of the largest growing markets in fiction today. DAW tends to focus on feminism and "female" oriented books. He also noted that TOR will accept unsolicited manuscripts and that they put out about 300 books a year across genres.

Finally, Ed pointed out that if your work doesn't have plot and characters you aren't going to get published. Here are some of his pointers:

Characters --

Characters are the backbone of any story. If you don't know your characters, you aren't going to be able to something worth reading. Ask yourself, for example, a few of these questions:

- *What makes a character emotional?
- *What is the character's function in the story?
- *What does a character sound like?
- *What does the character look like?
- *What is the character's true motivation?

People have aims and goals. If your characters don't have these then they aren't realistic as people and it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the reader to care about them. "Candid

Camera" your characters for yourself and your reader. Show them telling in appropriate jokes when drunk or at a wake. Show them doing embarrassing things. Perfection is boring. In addition, throw your characters "in the blender." Place opposing personalities together as often as possible to increase tension and to give opportunity to show people in awkward situations.

Unlike many, Ed recommends that you do not tell a story in chronological order. He calls this the "rock video" method of storytelling. Leave out more than you tell. Give only key scenes. Make reference to past events in passing. Have side characters jump in to take over for major ones. Remember, some of the most interesting characters from any game are the sidekicks or NPCs. Give them personalities too!

Ed also suggests that you create fables. Fables are a great way to tell past stories or to enrich a world and the characters in the world. Repetition of fables and stories are part of our lives and these things become part of the collective consciousness of a society. If this happens in our world then it should happen in the world you are writing. Doing this creates a rich and vibrant world.

One thing Ed also points out is that humans are animals. They are also "herd" animals. They pack. They follow a leader. They will fight between one another for position in the pack. Keep this in mind as you develop group and interpersonal dynamics.

That's all Ed had time for. He's always very entertaining and full of good information. An hour is hardly enough time to spend with this guy.